

Early Learning Council Executive Committee Meeting

April 8, 2013

1:00 pm-3:00 pm

Chicago-Illinois State Board of Education

JRTC- 100 W. Randolph, 14th Floor Video Conference Room

Springfield- Illinois State Board of Education

Alzina Building- 100 N. First Street- 3rd floor Video Conference Room

Conference Line: 888-494-4032 Access Code: 7198518485

Minutes

Participants

Chicago – Karen Berman, Gaylord Gieseke, Phyllis Glink, Dan Harris, Theresa Hawley, Teresa Kelly, Beth Mascitti-Miller, Harriet Meyer, Sylvia Puente, Elliot Regenstien, Vanessa Rich, Julie Smith, Sara Slaughter, Teri Talan, Kay Willmoth, Josie Yanguas

Springfield – Gina Ruther, Linda Saterfield, Joni Scritchlow, Cindy Zumwalt

Phone – Jeanna Capito, George Davis, Daniel Fitzgerald, Maria Whelan

I. Welcome and Introductions

Julie Smith and Harriet Meyer welcomed participants and guests to the Executive Council meeting.

The February minutes passed unanimously.

II. IV-E Waiver Presentation and Discussion

Cynthia Tate, Andria Gross, Teresa Kelly, Angela Farwig and Mike Shaver presented on the DCFS / Children's Home + Aid IV-E Waiver. The presentation noted that Illinois registers one of the lowest foster care entry rates in the US, but that kids stay in foster care over twice as long as the national average. The waiver explores the following question:

Will children aged birth thru five years old, who are initially placed in foster care, experience reduced trauma symptoms, increased permanency, reduced reentry and improved child well-being if they are provided child-parent therapy or other trauma informed parent support programs compared to similar children who are provided IV-E services as usual?

Project Link is a federally-funded pilot project being managed by Children's Home + Aid. The primary goal of the project is to improve identification, referral, enrollment, and follow-up of children 0-5 in or at risk of entering the child welfare system, and to use lessons learned from the pilot to improve systems, practice and policy statewide to increase the participation of these children and their families in comprehensive, high-quality early childhood development services.

The pilot focuses on 3 distinct populations served by the child welfare system: children 0-5 in foster care; children 0-5 receiving intact family services; and children 0-5 whose parents are teens in foster care. The target population consists of children in these populations living in the Chicago community areas of Englewood, West Englewood and Greater Grand Crossing. Together, these three neighborhoods comprise the Southside Early Learning Network (SELN), which will serve as a referral and service platform for this project.

Members were told that well over 100 individuals had been trained and that this was more than enough for the project. They were also told that the waiver relates well to Early Intervention.

III. Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge

Theresa Hawley gave the Committee an update on the RTT-ELC Scope of Work, which was delivered to the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services on March 27. Illinois will hear back within 60 days of that date.

The Scope of Work includes:

- Extremely detailed work plan for each of the 13 projects included in the grant
- The work plan broken down into three month chunks
- An updated budget and narrative
- No significant changes from our original proposal in October
 - Mostly shifted funds from one agency to the other in order to aid implementation
- Updated targets based on new data from ISBE and sequestration information from Region 5
- Did not change any %, just the number of children and sites to be more in line with what actually exists now that we have a little bit better data.
- Once the SOW is approved will provide the committee a copy of the dashboard every meeting to discuss progress

Theresa Hawley then led a discussion on the forecast of the QRIS, noting that Illinois has massive change it needs to bring to the field in terms of curriculum and teacher training, especially around the intentionality of early childhood instruction. Members noted that the picture is more complex than simply academic gains and that it's about balancing socio-emotional and cognitive development.

Members engaged in debate over what effect shifting CLASS and ECERS scores until 2016 would have on parents, providers and the QRIS system as a whole. Concerns were raised that the system could stabilize at a lower than desired level of quality, and that parents and providers could become confused. The suggestion was made to stagger desired scores so that providers could feel a sense of working towards a goal. Others urged remembering how daunting the task is and that it is the most difficult element to make significant changes in the score, and that moving the bar is acceptable. Others voiced concerns that if the standards are unattainable programs will not participate in the QRIS. Members noted that K-12 standards will also be rising and that the K-12 perspective should be an ongoing part of QRIS, RTT-ELC implementation and the work of the ELC. Finally, members moved to reconvene on a later date to come to a working consensus on the instructional quality of the QRIS.

IV. Head Start Sequestration Update

Kay Willmoth informed members that Head Start funding was reduced by 5%. Her office has advised grantees to begin planning for reduced funding, with tips on minimizing impact on current children. There are mechanisms in place for programs to report their reductions and grantees will have discretion to have disproportionate reductions in Head Start or Early Head Start. The City of Chicago's will be talking with its delegate agencies this week.

Teresa Kelly also noted that MIECHV is subject to a 5.1% cut due to the sequestration. She anticipates that current under spending will cover the costs.

V. Adjournment

Julie Smith and Harriet Meyer announced that the rest of the agenda will be addressed in a special meeting to be held on Thursday, April 25th.